

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SINGAP 00653 01 OF 02 131001Z

12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 SY-10 USSS-00 EB-11 FAA-00 CAB-09

DRC-01 /135 W

----- 013142

R 130815Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0062

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 0653

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SN

SUBJ: COMMENTS ON GOS PERFORMANCE RE TERRORIST INCIDENT

1. SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH WE ARE HESITANT TO PLAY MONDAY MORNING QUARTERBACK IN ASSESSING GOS' HANDLING OF THE RECENT TERRORIST INCIDENT, PARTICULARLY SINCE THIS WAS FIRST SUCH INCIDENT GOS HAS HAD TO HANDLE, EMBASSY'S VIEW, WHICH IS SHARED BY SOME OTHER FOREIGN OBSERVERS HERE, IS THAT GOS HANDLING OF AN ADMITTEDLY DIFFICULT SITUATION WAS RATHER INEPT. ALTHOUGH GOS OBJECTIVES IN HANDLING THE INCIDENT WERE LARGELY ACHIEVED, THE TACTICS EMPLOYED HAVE BEEN WIDELY CRITICISED AND CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE IRRESPONSIBLE. ALTHOUGH US INTERESTS WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY INVOLVED, USG
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SINGAP 00653 01 OF 02 131001Z

SHOULD BE AWARE THAT IN EVENT SERIOUS INCIDENT OF

THIS KIND INVOLVING US NATIONALS OR PROPERTY DID
ARISE, GOS COULD NOT BE RELIED UPON TO REACT IN A
MANNER CONSISTENT WITH OUR POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES.
END SUMMARY.

2. POSITIVE ELEMENTS IN GOS HANDLING OF RECENT
TERRORIST INCIDENT WERE (A) THEIR EXCELLENT POLICE
WORK IN DEVELOPING DETAILED INFORMATION ON TERRORISTS
AND THEIR TRAVEL AND MEANS OF ENTRY INTO SINGAPORE;
(B) THEIR PROMPT DECISION TO TAKE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES
TO IMPROVE SECURITY OF SINGAPORE AIRLINES AND THEIR
EMBASSIES ABROAD; (C) GOS INSISTENCE ON DISARMING
OF TERRORISTS BEFORE THEIR FLIGHT TO KUWAIT; AND (D)
PROTECTION OF LIFE OF THE HOSTAGES.

3. OTHERWISE GOS PERFORMANCE WAS RATHER INEPT AND
OFTEN IRRESPONSIBLE. THIS GENERATED CONSIDERABLE
CRITICISM AND EVEN SOME CONTEMPT FROM MANY MEMBERS OF
SINGAPORE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, THE FOREIGN PRESS AND
FROM SOME OF THE NORMALLY UNCRITICAL LOCAL
JOURNALISTS. PRIME MINISTER LEE'S DRIVING MOTIVATION
WAS TO GET RID OF THE TERRORISTS. THIS MOTIVATION
WAS BASED LARGELY ON FEAR THAT POLICE ACTION AGAINST
THE TERRORIST MIGHT PRECIPITATE SUBSEQUENT REPRISALS
AGAINST SINGAPORE -- ESPECIALLY THE VULNERABLE OIL
REFINING INDUSTRY, THIRD LARGEST IN WORLD AND HIGHLY
IMPORTANT TO SINGAPORE'S ECONOMY. A SECONDARY CON-
SIDERATION WAS SAFETY OF THE HOSTAGES. GOS WAS
OBVIOUSLY LESS CONCERNED THAT OTHER GOVERNMENTS MIGHT
BE OFFENDED BY THE TACTICS USED OR THAT GOS IMAGE
MIGHT SUFFER AS A RESULT. EMBASSY AND OTHER LOCAL OBSERVERS
BELIEVE FOLLOWING GOS ACTION WERE QUESTIONABLE:

A. GOS USED JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S OFFER TO
ASSIST AND SERVE AS INTERPRETER AND TERRORISTS'
INITIAL DESIRE TO TALK ONLY TO JAPANESE AND THEIR
REQUEST TO FLY OUT ON JAL PLANE AS EXCUSE TO PLACE
FULL RESPONSIBILITY ON GOJ TO ARRANGE FOR ONWARD
DESTINATION AND LOCATE SOME COUNTRY WHICH WOULD RECEIVE
TERRORISTS. GOS KEPT PRESSURING GOJ TO OFFER TERMS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SINGAP 00653 01 OF 02 131001Z

WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO TERRORISTS. THIS WAS
RESENTED BY THE JAPANESE SINCE THEY CONSIDERED THE
GOS SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR FINDING A SOLUTION.

B. AT NO TIME DURING ENTIRE INCIDENT DID GOS
GIVE ANY INDICATION THAT IT THOUGHT TERRORISTS SHOULD
BE ARRESTED AND TRIED IN SINGAPORE OR EXTRADITED.
INSTEAD IT WAS CLEAR THAT GOS

WAS AFRAID THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO APPREHEND TERRORISTS WOULD MAKE SINGAPORE TARGET FOR TERRORIST REPRISALS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE GOS DECIDED TO GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO ACCOMMODATE THEM. (THIS IS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO TOUGH ATTITUDE AND RIGOROUS ACTION WHICH GOS TAKES TOWARDS ANY VIOLATORS OF DOMESTIC LAW BY ITS OWN CITIZENS.) GOS EFFORTS WERE CLEARLY SUCCESSFUL SINCE TERRORISTS SENT MESSAGE BACK FROM KUWAIT THANKING SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT FOR TAKING SUCH GOOD CARE OF THEM.

C. WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE GOJ WAS UNWILLING TO GO ALONG FULLY WITH TERRORIST DEMANDS AND ARAB GOVERNMENTS DID NOT RESPOND TO SUBSEQUENT GOS APPROACHES REQUESTING THAT THEY TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECEIVING TERRORISTS, GOS THEN OFFERED THE TERRORIST THE OPTION OF ALLOWING THEM TO PROCEED OUT TO SEA IN THE LAJU TO WHATEVER DESTINATION THEY CHOSE. THIS "SOLUTION" WOULD ONLY HAVE SHIFTED THE PROBLEM TO INDONESIA, MALAYSIA OR POSSIBLY THAILAND SINCE THE LAJU'S MAXIMUM CRUISING RANGE IS ONLY 500 MILES. THIS PROPOSAL WAS NOT DISCUSSED IN ADVANCE WITH THE INDONESIAN, MALAYSIAN OR THAI GOVERNMENTS. SENIOR INDONESIAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL HERE EXPRESSED STRONG DISPLEASURE TO EMBOFF OVER THIS PROPOSED SOLUTION.

D. BEFORE TERRORIST HAD DEFINITELY REFUSED THIS OFFER GOS INFORMED THEM THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT OBJECT IF THE TERRORISTS WISHED TO SEEK "ASYLUM" IN ONE OF THE 42 DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN SINGAPORE. THE GOS GUARANTEED SAFE PASSAGE TO THE EMBASSY OF THEIR CHOICE AND PROVIDED A LIST WITH PHONE NUMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. THEY

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 SINGAP 00653 01 OF 02 131001Z

MADE IT CLEAR IN THEIR COMMUNICATION TO THE TERRORISTS THAT THEIR OFFER OF ASYLUM WAS, OF COURSE, SUBJECT TO THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHIEF OF THE DIPLOMATIC MISSION WHERE THEY MIGHT SEEK ASYLUM. THIS PLAN WAS PRESENTED TO THE TERRORISTS WITHOUT CONSULTING DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN ADVANCE; THE DEAN OF THE CORPS WAS INFORMED VERBALLY ONLY 45 MINUTES BEFORE THIS "OFFER" WAS RELEASED TO PRESS. THIS INCIDENT GENERATED CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM WITHIN THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AS REPORTED IN SINGAPORE'S 499.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SINGAP 00653 02 OF 02 131129Z

13

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 SY-10 USSS-00 EB-11 FAA-00 CAB-09

DRC-01 /135 W

----- 013935

R 130815Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0063

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 SINGAPORE 0653

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. THERE IS EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THIS
MOVE WAS ONLY A SMOKE SCREEN TO COVER GOS EFFORT TO
PERSUADE NORTH KOREA TO ASSIST IN THE TRANSFER OF
THE TERRORISTS FROM SINGAPORE. ALTHOUGH GOS MESSAGE
TO TERRORISTS SUGGESTING ASYLUM IN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS
WAS GIVEN TO PRESS FEB. 4, IT WAS DATED FEB 2.
FURTHERMORE, THE GOS SOUNDED OUT NORTH KOREA ABOUT
POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE IN RECEIVING THE TERRORISTS ON
THE EVENING OF FEB. 4, PRIOR TO REPORTED TERRORIST
ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT FOLLOWING
SPECULATION, REQUEST ON FEB. 5 FOR NORTH KOREAN ASSISTANCE.
EMBASSY BELIEVES GOS MAY HAVE FELT THE ROK, US AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS
MIGHT BE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO CALLING ON THE DPRK FOR ASSIS-
TANCE AND TRIED TO CREATE THE APPEARANCE THAT THIS
WAS BEING DONE IN RESPONSE TO TERRORIST REQUEST.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SINGAP 00653 02 OF 02 131129Z

F. GOS INTEREST IN OBTAINING DPRK ASSISTANCE WAS SO GREAT THAT LEE FELT IT NECESSARY TO COMPOSE LETTER TO PRESIDENT KIM IL SUNG IN HIGHLY FLATTERING LANGUAGE PRAISING "REVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLES AND LEADERSHIP OF YOUR GOVERNMENT" AND SUGGESTING DPRK ASSISTANCE "WILL FORGE CLOSER LINKS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES." GIVEN COMPETITIVE POSITION BETWEEN DPRK AND ROK CONSULATES GENERAL HERE FOR GREATER GOS RECOGNITION, THIS LANGUAGE CERTAINLY DID NOT GO UNNOTICED. FURTHERMORE, APPARENTLY IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE GOOD FAITH TO THE TERRORISTS, GOS RELEASED THIS LETTER TO THE PRESS. (GOS HAD ARRANGED FOR TERRORISTS TO RECEIVE NEWSPAPERS EVERY DAY AND USED GOS STATEMENTS APPEARING IN PRESS TO CONVINCE THEM OF THEIR GOOD FAITH.)

G. FINALLY, GOS AGREED TO HAVE TWELVE SINGAPORE OFFICIALS SUBSTITUTED FOR THREE HOSTAGES ON JAL FLIGHT TO KUWAIT. ALTHOUGH THIS WAS APPARENTLY NECESSARY TO CONVINCE THE TERRORISTS TO DISARM BEFORE THEY BOARDED JAL PLANE, TERRORISTS IN KUWAIT WERE STILL HOLDING JAPANESE EMBASSY OFFICIALS AS HOSTAGE. HENCE, BY AGREEING TO SEND SO MANY OFFICIALS TO "GUARANTEE" THEIR SAFE PASSAGE TO KUWAIT, GOS WAS ASSUMING EVEN GREATER RISK IN EVENT JAPANESE TERRORISTS IN KUWAIT SUCCEEDED IN SOME MANNER IN GETTING CONTROL OF THEM. THIS ACTION COULD HAVE ESCALATED INCIDENT WELL BEYOND ITS ORIGINAL SERIOUSNESS.

4. SINGAPORE POLICY IN HANDLING INCIDENT WAS OPPOSED TO US VIEW THAT TERRORISTS SHOULD BE APPREHENDED AND TRIED. GOS WAS SUCCESSFUL IN RIDDING SINGAPORE OF TERRORISTS WITHOUT LOSS OF LIFE AND IN MANNER WHICH WILL PROBABLY AVOID REPRISALS. HOWEVER, EVEN IF SINGAPORE POLICY WERE TO BE ACCEPTED AS VALID, GOS COULD HAVE PURSUED MORE RESPONSIBLE COURSE OF FLYING THEM OUT ON ONE OF THEIR OWN PLANES USING VOLUNTEER CREW, INSTEAD OF TRYING TO SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHER GOVERNMENTS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SINGAP 00653 02 OF 02 131129Z

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR US INTERESTS. US NATIONALS AND INTERESTS WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY INVOLVED IN THIS INCIDENT. HOWEVER, IN LARGER SENSE IT WAS CLEAR THAT TERRORIST ATTACK WAS DIRECTED AGAINST US SUPPORT FOR VIETNAM AND ISRAEL. IT WAS CLEAR FROM ACTIONS

DESCRIBED ABOVE THAT GOS WAS PREPARED TO GO TO
CONSIDERABLE LENGTHS AND TO DISREGARD OTHER COUNTRIES'
INTERESTS IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBLE TERRORIST
REPRISALS AGAINST SINGAPORE. CONSEQUENTLY, US
SHOULD ASSUME THAT IF SOME INCIDENT OR CRISIS
INVOLVING US NATIONALS OR PROPERTY WERE TO ARISE,
GOS WOULD NOT NECESSARILY ACT IN A MANNER CONSISTENT
WITH OUR POLICY ON TERRORISM.
CRONK

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARAMILITARY FORCES, PERSONAL OPINION, POLITICAL SITUATION, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, EXTREMISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SINGAP00653
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SINGAPORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740235/aaaabgww.tel
Line Count: 286
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 JUL 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <13 JAN 2003 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COMMENTS ON GOS PERFORMANCE RE TERRORIST INCIDENT
TAGS: PINS, SN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005